

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 17, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretaries Mayorkas and Blinken:

As Members of Congress, we write to express our strong support for the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program and urge its use as part of the United States’ response to address recovery efforts in Central America, particularly in Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. TPS was designed by Congress to be a living and breathing legislative solution that provides safe haven for persons who do not meet the legal definition of a “refugee” under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) but who are nevertheless unable to safely return to their country of origin due to ongoing armed conflict, substantial disruptions due to a natural disaster, or other “extraordinary and temporary conditions.” Just as TPS offers a reprieve to these individuals, who are permitted to remain temporarily and work lawfully in the United States, it also offers time and space for their countries of origin to achieve greater stability and security and to make necessary progress toward recovery and rebuilding.<sup>1</sup>

Late last year, these four Central American countries were hit hard by two unprecedented category 4 hurricanes—Eta and Iota—that swept through the region and caused significant devastation. The countries were already battling the coronavirus pandemic and pervasive food insecurity and today the economic damage caused by these two storms is expected to far surpass the damage caused by Hurricane Mitch, the second deadliest Atlantic hurricane on record, that hit the region in 1998. Of course, the impact of Hurricane Mitch was significant enough that it led to the designation of TPS for both Honduras and Nicaragua. Unfortunately, similar circumstances have again destroyed the livelihoods and safety of Central Americans.

The TPS program is a practical and effective tool for American foreign policy and allows the United States to respond quickly and appropriately in cases where safe haven is warranted. Section 244 of the INA applies to a very specific set of circumstances. Specifically, in cases where: (1) there is ongoing armed conflict; (2) there is a significant impact on living conditions as a result of natural disasters; or (3) to address conditions that are extraordinary and temporary in nature that prevents foreign nationals from returning home safely so long as the presence of immigrants from a designated country are not counter to the national interest. Conditions on the ground satisfy the statutory criteria for TPS designation.

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<sup>1</sup> See Silva Mathema and Tom Jawetz, “TPS Can Promote Stability and Recovery for Central American Countries Hit by Recent Hurricanes,” Center for American Progress, December 21, 2020, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/reports/2020/12/21/493979/tps-can-aid-recovery-central-american-countries-hit-recent-hurricanes/>.

At least 309,000 homes have been impacted by the hurricanes, critical infrastructure like roads, airports, and public health facilities suffered massive damage, and the loss of tens of thousands of hectares of agriculture will exacerbate both severe food insecurity and economic privation.<sup>2</sup> Simply put, these countries are not now capable of adequately or safely accommodating the return of their nationals. The governments of both Guatemala and Honduras have requested TPS—a precondition for a TPS grant under INA 244(b)(1)(B).<sup>3</sup> And while Nicaragua and El Salvador have not formally requested a designation, a designation is still appropriate under the “temporary and extraordinary conditions” category—particularly as the damage to El Salvador from the storms built upon the significant damage the country suffered months earlier from two tropical storms, Amanda and Cristobal.<sup>4</sup> We believe that the use of the TPS program will be significant in addressing public health infrastructure challenges exacerbated by the hurricanes and complement the recovery and rebuilding strategies the United States will pursue in the region.

While legislation has been introduced in the House to address the humanitarian crisis in Central America,<sup>5</sup> the Department of Homeland Security, in consultation with the State Department, have the independent authority to make TPS designations consistent with our national interests.<sup>6</sup> Given the impact of the hurricanes, we strongly support the designation of these countries under section 244 of the INA and encourage the full use of the discretionary powers that Congress has already provided to the executive branch.

Sincerely,



Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Mondaire Jones  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

/s/  
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Albio Sires  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

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<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> See INA 244(b)(1)(B).

<sup>4</sup> See INA 244(b)(1)(C)

<sup>5</sup> See H.R. 8793, 116<sup>th</sup> Congress.

<sup>6</sup> See INA 244(b)(1)

/s/

Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

/s/

Jesús G. “Chuy” García  
Member of Congress

/s/

Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress

/s/

Deborah K. Ross  
Member of Congress

/s/

Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress

/s/

Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress

/s/

Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress

/s/

Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress

/s/

André Carson  
Member of Congress

/s/

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

/s/

Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress

/s/

Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

/s/

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress

/s/

Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress

/s/

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

/s/

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

/s/

Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress

/s/

Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress

/s/

Raul M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

/s/

Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress

/s/

Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

/s/

Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

/s/

Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress

/s/

Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress

/s/

Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress

/s/

Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress

/s/

Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress

/s/

Dina Titus  
Member of Congress

/s/

John Yarmuth  
Member of Congress

/s/

Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress

/s/

Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

/s/

Anthony G. Brown  
Member of Congress

/s/

James R. Langevin  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Michael F.Q. San Nicolas  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Brendan F. Boyle  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Raul Ruiz, M.D.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Peter Welch  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Pete Aguilar  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Mary Gay Scanlon  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jason Crow  
Member of Congress